

Student Abuse: A Theoretical Analysis

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1. Causes of Teacher Abuse

Several indicators can be identified as likely contributing to teacher abuse of students; the factors explored in this paper include a teacher's skills and characteristics, the environment, and student characteristics. Theories of child abuse have also identified many of these factors as contributing to child abuse by a parent/guardian.

2. Applying theory to teacher abuse

The Transitional Model of Child Abuse (Wolfe, 1999) is the most applicable model through which to understand causes of teacher abuse of students. The Transitional Model solidifies the link between child abuse and stressors but acknowledges that the link between stressors and the resulting abuse may vary. The Model incorporates various theoretical viewpoints – including Frustration-Aggression, Cue-Arousal, Personalistic, and Social Learning to explain how stressors may lead to child abuse. In addition, Wolfe (1999) includes a discussion of compensatory factors and indicates that if measures are not implemented to reduce stress, the likelihood that child abuse will continue is compounded. Based on the Transitional Model, teachers may be faced with several stressors, and those who do not cope well may be at risk to abuse students. The stressors examined in this paper include job competence and job satisfaction, the school environment and culture, and student characteristics. The Transitional Model's presumption that stress may precipitate, or indeed perpetuate, teacher abuse. For example, a teacher's feelings of inadequacy when teaching students with a range of challenges, working in a negative school atmosphere, and not being supported by school administration are all potential causes of student abuse. Instead of being directly linked to abuse, each of these factors may instead cause stress and, according to The Transitional Model, it is this heightened stress that increases the likelihood that a teacher will abuse pupils.

As noted in the Transitional Model, there is variance in how individual's cope with stress and it is coping, or lack of coping, that either protects against or instigates abusive behaviour (Wolfe, 1999, p. 68). The Transitional Model highlights the cyclical nature of stress, abuse, and coping. Wolfe (1999) also postulates that an individual's response to stressors can be reshaped via compensatory factors. Providing support for teachers who experience stress when dealing with students with specific needs and challenges would be compensatory. Therefore, addressing the causes of stress would, according to the Transitional Model, reduce the likelihood of student abuse.

A discussion of the various causes of teacher stress and compensatory factors is provided below. As noted, the Transitional Model reflects various theories of child abuse; therefore, each of the stressors found in this paper will be discussed with respect to a specific theory of child abuse it may be best understood through. Following the discussion of stressors, an overview of applicable compensatory measures is included to address specific teacher needs.

3. Stressors

Job performance and environmental factors are the primary categories under which stressors will be discussed. Within each of these categories are a variety of potentially stress inducing precipitators. The following discussion is divided into job performance, under which teacher characteristics, competence, and satisfaction will be discussed. The second general category, environmental factors, includes a discussion of student characteristics and needs, school culture, and administrative support as potential stressors. A discussion of each potential stressor as well as the utility of the Transitional Model to understand each stressor is provided next.

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3.1 Job performance

Job performance is a measure that combined satisfaction with the profession and competence as a teacher and both were shown to be related to teacher abuse of students. The very strong relationship between job performance and the use of abusive behaviour is not surprising given that a teacher's sense of self has an influence on the ways in which he or she perceives and interacts with students, and on the teaching and learning strategies implemented (Hargreaves, 1975; Nias, 1989). Incompetence and dissatisfaction may be pre-cursors to stress or may be caused by stress. Regardless, the link between stress, incompetence, and job satisfaction must be understood and addressed to reduce the risk of teacher abuse.

Job competence and satisfaction may be impacted due to struggles with evolving technology, difficulties managing a classroom, and having an overall negative impression of self and one's effectiveness, which are characteristic of teachers with poor job performance. Lacking confidence and skill may lead to overwhelming frustration and stress and, for some, this stress may lead to aggression (i.e., Frustration-Aggression hypothesis). Regardless of the order in which stress, competence, and satisfaction occur, understanding that stress is a key dimension of job satisfaction and competence is important when attempting to discern why some teachers are abusive.

Communication, both verbal and nonverbal, is an important dynamic between teachers and students (Halberstadt & Hall, 1980) and teachers who are dissatisfied in the profession, or who do not feel competent, will convey a different message to students than those who are competent and content. Teachers who are not satisfied, or who do not feel competent, will bring these attributes – consciously or unconsciously – to the classroom. Dissatisfied or incompetent teachers may convey their negative feelings to students through their: a) actions, b) teaching practices, and c) verbal and nonverbal communication. In turn, students whose teacher is dissatisfied may intuitively sense that their teacher is not accessible to them, and thus tension is created in the classroom (Adalsteinsdottir, 2004). Student reactions to classroom tension may be to either to 1) disrupt or defy, which could then increase a teacher's stress and lead to abuse (i.e., Frustration- Aggression hypothesis), or 2) respond as the teacher wishes, which would reinforce the teacher's negative interactions (i.e., Social Learning Theory). Ultimately, stress associated with feeling dissatisfied or incompetent may initiate and reinforce student abuse.

It is important to note that the relationship between job performance and abuse does not indicate that one is causing the other, instead poor job performance and abuse are merely occurring at the same time. Therefore, it is possible that teachers viewed as dissatisfied, or incompetent are also viewed as abusive; conversely, it may be that a teacher who is abusive is also considered, by virtue of their personality or behaviour, to be dissatisfied and incompetent. Therefore, personal, and perhaps biased perceptions may contribute to the strong relationship between teacher abuse and job performance. Various issues may impact how a teacher is viewed such as a teacher's gender and age.

3.2 Gender and age

Specific teacher characteristics such as age and gender may impact abuse levels. In an American study, close to half of the respondents (47%) reported three or more abusive teachers in their school (McEvoy, 2005). The discrepancy between this and other research regarding the gender of abusive teachers may be related to the age group being taught. It is also possible that more teachers do indeed engage in abuse at the high school level; however, it is also possible that personal biases impacted which teachers were considered abusive and nonabusive.

Recent research regarding which bullies are accepted by peers may help to explain the overrepresentation of males as abusive teachers. Researchers have found that the gender of the bully's target has an impact on whether the bully is rejected or not. Boys who bully boys are rejected by male, but not female peers; however, when boys bullied girls, it was the female, not male, peers who rejected them (Dijkstra, Munniksma, Lindenberg, & Veenstra, 2010). Therefore, it is possible that a teacher is judged and labeled according to whom they abuse.

Those teaching longer may experience increased stress due to a variety of job performance related issues such as changes in curriculum and the needs and challenges of students. Over time, and as the educational system evolves, teachers who were once confident may feel less so as they attend to persistent shifts in pedagogy. Competence, dissatisfaction, and abusive behaviour are likely cyclical and impact each other. Teachers who have difficulty capturing and maintaining students' interests and who fail to adapt to new technology (i.e., competence) will no doubt add to student frustration. Frustrated students may act out due to boredom and a lack of validation which may result in students' challenging the teacher's position in the classroom (Kohn, 1993). Once a teacher feels challenged, openly questioned, and possibly disrespected by students, he or she will certainly feel less competent and satisfied and experience increased levels of stress which, in turn, leads to abuse.

Teachers in the profession longer are perhaps less willing or able to alter their teaching methods and so may be experiencing heightened stress as the demands on them increase.

Seniority and security are normally related to the number of years in a profession. Those teaching for several years may not fear any consequences for abuse; it is also possible that some teachers have been engaging in abuse for years without being cautioned. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977a) suggests that when behaviour is rewarded, or not punished, the behaviour is likely to continue. However, of note, newer teachers may also struggle to adapt to the demands of the profession, which may explain why there is a wide age range for teachers identified as abusive. Also, newer teachers may model behaviours of more established teachers (i.e., Social Modeling Theory) and, in some instances, the models will be abusive. If a newer teacher witnesses their teacher model abusive behaviour and the outcome is positive (i.e., a well-behaved class) they too might adapt such strategies. Age or years teaching are important factors to consider when understanding the causes of teacher abuse.

Therefore, a lack of job competence and job satisfaction will contribute to teacher stress and that stress may cause abuse. There are many factors, such as those discussed above, that could contribute to feelings of job dissatisfaction and incompetence. Other potential stressors that may contribute to student abuse are related to the school environment. It may be that the school environment is an independent stressor; however, it is also possible that the school environment contributes to feelings of competence and satisfaction, which in turn influence stress and then the potential for abuse. The school environment as a possible stressor is discussed next.

3.3 Environment

The school environment may be highly influential in supporting, encouraging, or contributing to stress and teacher abuse. It is also possible that the school environment influences competence and satisfaction as well as stress and abuse. Issues such as class size, classroom dynamic, and school atmosphere may affect a teacher's stress levels. Each of these environmental issues is discussed with respect to their role in abuse.

3.4 Class size

According to the Ministry of Education, less than 6% of classes in grades K-3 have 25 or more students and no primary classes in Ontario currently have more than 23 students (Ministry of Education, 2010c). Therefore, smaller class size in the primary grades may artificially decrease overall average elementary class sizes. If average class sizes are larger in higher grades, a teacher abusing in a higher grade may have more students.

In a study of 166 elementary teachers, higher teacher satisfaction was associated with small class size (Terry, 2002). Focus groups indicated that teaching fewer students provided teachers more time with students, positively influenced parent-teacher relations, and provided opportunities for teachers to get to know their students better (Terry, 2002). Based on this research, smaller classes may influence student-teacher interactions and relationships which, as noted, may influence how a teacher is perceived by students. In larger classes, teachers may feel increased stress due to a lack of individualized assistance that they can provide students. Competence, satisfaction, and/or stress may be related to the amount of time a teacher can devote to the class, instead of being related to the size of the class.

Although teachers in larger classes may be more apt to abuse, these behaviours may be linked to the stress associated with student achievement and a lack of appropriate interaction time, which are by-products of a larger class. The needs and characteristics of students may impact stress and in larger classes, the needs of students may vary greatly. Teachers assigned to larger classes composed of students with varying needs may experience heightened stress due to the variance in student abilities, behavioural concerns, and student learning difficulties. On the other hand, even teachers working in smaller classes may experience stress if they have several students with diverse and unique needs. Therefore, it may not be class size, but instead student achievement, feelings of effectiveness, and being able to address diverse student needs that increases a teacher's stress, which then may lead to abuse. Student characteristics and specific needs will be addressed next to contextualize stress and abuse.

3.5 Child characteristics and difficulties

Student characteristics may impact teacher stress and abuse. Classroom management difficulties have been linked to classrooms composed of mixed ability students (Reid, Clunies-Ross, Goacher, & Vile, 1981; Veenman, Voeten, & Lem, 1987). Teachers in training have often noted that they are neither fully prepared nor confident when assisting students who require additional teacher assistance (Burnard & Laxley, 2000). Researchers have found that managing difficult students (i.e., behavioural, and disciplinary challenges) may be one of the most emotionally draining and challenging dimensions of the teaching profession (Barton & Vlachou, 2004; Shaalvik & Shaalvik, 2009). Behavioural, emotional, and student learning difficulties will be discussed next with respect to teacher stress and abuse.

3.6 Age

With age, children move from a) avoiding consequences by accepting and following rules to b) questioning rules and learning that not all negative behaviours will be punished (see Kohlberg, 1976; Piaget 1952). As children begin to question teachers and challenge their authority, teachers may become frustrated. Teacher stress may increase when students begin to move away from their traditionally prescribed roles as outlined by the tenets of the hidden curriculum.

The hidden curriculum is a systemic means in which to shape the way people think and act. The hidden curriculum operates on two distinct levels (Osborne, 2001). The first level includes the obvious rules of conduct and behaviour that school personnel continuously impress upon students; the second level is far less obvious and has a profound effect on how teachers and students interact (Osborne, 2001). The hidden curriculum reinforces conformity, unquestioning obedience to authority, and passivity from students; in addition, the hierarchy of power within a school requires that students be deferential to teachers and school administration (Osborne, 2001). Researchers have found that educators reward behaviours such as subservience, silence, and being well-behaved, which are student characteristics that meet the criteria for the hidden curriculum (Mancus, 1992). As noted, younger students are likely to conform to these expectations; however, students may challenge hidden and overt expectations as they age. Repeated student challenges likely increase a teacher's stress while, in turn, impacting job satisfaction and competence. A teacher who is stressed due to student challenges and who does not cope well with such stress may resort to abuse.

Once a teacher and student(s) have established a problematic relationship, a cycle of continually escalating confrontation may ensue. The cyclical nature of aggression, and retaliation, termed the coercive cycle, has been studied at length (Patterson, 1982). The coercive cycle has been applied to families and could be informative when examining abuse by teachers. Researchers have found that aggressive behaviour of one family member can produce an aggressive response from another, which in turn escalates the aggressive response by the first person; each party responds to the first with elevated levels of aggression (Patterson, 1982; Patterson et al., 1989). Parents resort to abusing their child, or children, to gain power and control in their relationships with them (Montminy & Straka, 2008) and the same dynamic may be occurring in Ontario's classrooms. Within families, it is believed that each aggressive response is intended to stop the other person's aggression but, conversely, each response is likely to promote further aggression (Patterson et al., 1989); a similar pattern could be occurring within a classroom. A teacher may react with aggression to a student's behaviour, and this may initiate a pattern of coercion, as the student and teacher engage in a power struggle to end the other's increasingly antagonistic retort. The teacher will certainly feel increased levels of stress as the cycle unfolds, which may then lead to abuse.

Therefore, challenges to a teacher's authority, issues in managing a classroom, and negative student behaviours would individually, or in combination, elevate teacher stress. This stress may result in abuse by the teacher and, in some instances, perpetuate a cycle of aggression between a teacher and student(s). Ultimately, a teacher is the adult in the relationship and must act appropriately and be mindful of the best interests of the student, regardless of the stress and stressors under which they work. Along with the behaviours (i.e., challenges to authority, defiance, etc.) that may be typically found within a classroom, an additional stressor may be experienced when a classroom is composed of students with learning difficulties or behavioural concerns.

3.7 Learning, emotional, and behavioural difficulties

Having a learning or emotional difficulty was shown to be related to whether a student was targeted by an abusive teacher. As noted above, some students with learning, emotional, or behavioural difficulties may increase a teacher's stress if they do not conform to the expectations of the hidden curriculum. However, other issues may also be important when understanding the affect student exceptionalities have on teacher stress.

There are several reasons why children with learning, behaviour, and emotional issues may be targeted by teachers. Teaching children with exceptionalities may be both challenging and stressful as such a student may negatively affect the classroom dynamic, require extensive teacher time, or may interrupt the teacher's goals for the day (i.e., get through a lesson, all students working quietly) and, as such, the teacher may see a student with exceptionalities as a source of potential stress.

There is longstanding recognition of the link between frustration and aggression (Dollard et al., 1939) and it may be that having several students who require additional support or attention causes teacher stress and frustration. The Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis postulates that frustration precedes aggression; frustration is caused when an individual's intended goals are blocked and aggression is used to alleviate any source of frustration (Dollard et al., 1939). The link between frustration and aggression is reported in families with a history of abuse. Frequent problems when attempting to curtail a child's negative behaviours are related to an increased likelihood

that parents will utilize abusive and punitive measures (McElroy & Rodriguez, 2008). The same may be occurring with teachers and students; those students who require additional attention, who do not understand the material regardless of a teacher's efforts, or who need extensive support and assistance may increase a teacher's frustration or stress if the student is viewed as preventing a teacher from achieving their lesson's goals (i.e., paying attention to all students, successfully teach a lesson, etc.). The teacher, out of frustration, may then consciously or unconsciously abuse (i.e., yelling, name calling, denigrating). Although the source of stress (i.e., a student who does not understand) may lead to frustration, this theory suggests that the teacher will aggress specifically toward the source – in this case the student – or arbitrarily, such as to the entire class.

The Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis was further discussed by Berkowitz (1989), who suggested that frustration alone will not produce aggression; instead, frustration prepares the frustrated to aggress and that actual aggression depends on stimulus cues found in the environment (i.e., Cue-Arousal Theory). According to the Cue-Arousal Theory, if a teacher is frustrated, then the potential for aggression is present; however, the teacher will not aggress without a cue (i.e., such as a student not understanding the material or requiring additional help) or without significant negative affect being aroused. The role affect plays may be important when understanding why one teacher may abuse while another teacher under the same circumstances does not. Any negative affect associated with feelings of dissatisfaction and incompetence may separate teachers into those who do and do not use abuse students.

Stress, or coping with stress, may result from inadequate teacher training. Teacher education programs may not provide the preparation necessary for educators to meet the many and varied needs of today's students (Burnard & Laxley, 2000). Without appropriate training, a lack of confidence and knowledge in programming alternative lessons may lead to heightened levels of frustration and stress for teachers. In addition, a lack of administrative support for teachers adapting to the varying needs of students with LD's has been found to be related to increased teacher frustration (Barton & Vlachou, 2004). The fact that students are bringing pronounced emotional, social, and behavioural problems to school compounds the dilemma of inadequate teacher training (Burnard & Laxley, 2000). The result may be that teachers have heightened anxiety and feelings of inadequacy on the job which, in turn, negatively affects teacher-student interactions (Burnard & Laxley, 2000). A lack of teacher candidate preparation in the areas devoted to classroom management and special education instruction may affect the ways in which teachers assess their competency, relate with their students, and appraise their overall job satisfaction.

There is no strong evidence that indicates having a larger class is related to, or causal in, abuse by teachers. Instead, the dynamic within a class may be the important factor when understanding teacher abuse and class size may simply increase the risk of a negative dynamic. Teachers will feel more competent and satisfied if they have a class that is performing well, if student and teacher interaction and communication are positive, and if there is time and resources available to address the specific needs of all students. Thus, the general atmosphere and the needs of the class may precipitate stress and lead to abuse. It is possible that the classroom and the culture within a school contribute to the stress that precedes teacher abuse. School culture is discussed next with respect to the causes of stress and subsequent abuse.

3.8 School culture

Social Learning Theory may help to explain teacher abuse of students. It may be that witnessing abuse and its benefits, or certainly any lack of repercussions, may entice others to use similar methods to maintain or establish certain goals (i.e., specific behaviours, interactions, etc.) within the school. It may be that some schools nurture a culture that permits abuse while other schools do not. Given that abusive behaviours are not necessarily intentional; some schools may have more teachers who lack appropriate child management skills and ultimately abuse students. Regardless, the notion that some school cultures promote rather than negate such interactions cannot be discounted. Research has shown that school-based peer bullying does not always occur in private (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Fekkes, Pijpers, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005); instead, child and adult bullying frequently occurs around bystanders (Bullying Survey, 2005; Tracy, Lutgen- Sabuandvik, & Alberts, 2006). With respect to peer bullying, research by Pepler and colleagues (Pepler, Craig, Connolly, Uyuile, McMaster, & Jiang, 2006) suggests that those who watch in silence and do not intervene (i.e., passive bystander) in bullying may be inadvertently promoting such negative behaviours. Specifically, the researchers speculated that the bystander provides an audience for the bully, and the bully may interpret the presence of others as nonverbal support for their behaviour. Pepler and Craig (2000) found that 71% of teachers report usually intervening in peer bullying episodes; however, only 25% of students reported that teachers do indeed intervene.

Additionally, in a study of self-reported school bullies, only half of the bullies acknowledged that a teacher spoke with them about their behaviour (Fekkes, Pijpers, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005). These results suggest that teachers are aware of peer bullying, but do not always intervene.

Teacher abuse is likely like bullying in that others are aware of the behaviour but are not intervening. Researchers have shown that teachers are aware of their colleagues' negative treatment of students (Twemlow & Fonagy, 2005; Twemlow et al., 2006). A caregiver (i.e., teacher) who is a passive bystander to a student's experience of bullying or abuse is, as noted in the Spectrum (2006), is demonstrating a "failure to act" in a situation that may be putting the child at risk for emotional harm (p. 50). Teachers who are bystanders to their colleagues' abusive behaviour are not only silently encouraging the behaviour, but they are also culpable. By not intervening when a teacher abuses a student, adults are contributing to a school culture that supports the mistreatment of students and permits abuse; a permissive culture likely explains higher rates of abuse in some schools.

Just as abuse may be a byproduct of a school's culture, so might abuse of teachers by students. Teachers who are the target of a student's abusive behaviours will no doubt feel stress and perhaps be at risk to abuse others. Like teacher abuse of students, teachers being bullied by students is known to occur, but is often not reported (Twemlow et al., 2006). Between 4.0% and 57% of teachers report being a target of students' verbal, emotional, or physical bullying (National Centre for Education Statistics (IES), 2009; OSSIF, 2005; Twemlow et al., 2006). Specific to physical abuse of teachers, 7.5% of American elementary school teachers reported being threatened with physical harm during 2008 and between 4.5% and 5.7% of elementary teachers and between 2.1% and 7% of secondary school teachers report being physically attacked by students (IES, 2009; Matsui, 2005). Although detailed statistics are not available for Ontario's elementary school teachers, US based data reveals that the rates for physical threats and physical attacks against teachers have remained consistent between 1993 and 2008 (IES, 2009).

A study conducted some years ago revealed that student aggression is an issue faced by many of Ontario's secondary school teachers (Matsui, 2005). Specifically, this study indicated that 36% of secondary school teachers reported being bullied by students: of those bullied, 61% were part-time, and 34% were full-time teachers. In addition, 39% of male teachers and 35% of female teachers reported being bullied by students; 10% of teachers reported taking time off work and 53% reported suffering health-related issues because of student bullying.

A history of being bullied by students may increase teacher stress and perhaps impact a teacher's coping abilities. Similarly, a history of childhood abuse may impact current stress as well as one's ability to cope. A teacher's history of abuse has been linked to teacher abuse of students. For example, a moderate relationship was found with regards to being an abusive teacher, the number of students the teacher abused, and being abused as a student in school (Twemlow et al., 2006). In addition, these same researchers found a moderate relationship between the number of students the teacher abused and being abused in their classrooms by their students. The impact of being abused by students likely influences a teacher's sense of competence and job satisfaction. For those abused by students, this dynamic may add to what is already a potentially stressful work environment, which may result in stress that some teachers have difficulty containing.

Teachers who are targeted by students, who work in a school environment where negativity is commonplace, or who have colleagues who engage in abuse, may feel heightened stress. The school's atmosphere may be causing teacher stress, but how a teacher copes with stress will impact whether they abuse. As noted by Wolfe (1999) in his discussion of the Transitional Model of Abuse, coping styles will impact how a situation is assessed and whether individual's abuse. Environmental stressors will be assessed differently depending on one's coping style and variables such as a teacher's history of abuse, and this may determine whether environmental stressors contribute to abuse. Another factor in a school's environment that is important to consider is a school's administration. A discussion of administrative support as it relates to stress and abuse is provided next.

3.9 Administrative Support

Minimal research has been conducted to understand the impact school administration has on teacher stress and abuse, a review of research regarding leadership and employee satisfaction outside of the teaching profession will provide a context in which to understand teacher abuse of students.

Several investigations have revealed that a work environment that lacks respect and ethical interactions between colleagues have been linked to workers who are less committed to their positions (Bulutlar & Unler 2009), and researchers have determined that those who do not receive supervisory support experience job strain (Seiger & Bettina, 2009).

In addition, Mageroy, Lau, Riise, and Moen, (2009) found a linear relationship between supervisor equality and workplace bullying. It was shown that fair leadership and equality amongst employees were related to less observed bullying. Others have found that job security (Agervold, 2009; Tuckey, Dollard, Hosking, & Winefield, 2009) and visible support (Tuckey et al., 2009) are related to less conflict and fewer incidences of workplace bullying. This research suggests that inadequate leadership is related to workplace bullying. Although much of this literature is on peer vocational bullying, it is applicable to teachers' behaviours.

A lack of administrative support could affect a teacher's job satisfaction and perceived or actual competence. Administration plays a role in why some teachers may feel that they are ineffectual classroom practitioners (Burnard & Laxley, 2000). As noted, teachers who feel, or are, incompetent likely experience increased stress and may be at risk to abuse. Minimal support when addressing the many challenges teachers face may compound pre-existing stressors and impact one's coping abilities. Without administrative support, a teacher who is struggling to cope may resort to, or unintentionally engage in, abuse of students. Support from school administrators may be a key determinant when hoping to minimize teacher abuse.

For teacher graduates, their most pressing needs focus on developing classroom management strategies and dealing with disruptive and problematic students (DePaul, 2000). The difficulties inherent in starting in the profession could be alleviated with additional administrative support, which would, in turn, may reduce the likelihood of teacher abuse. School boards that offer highly structured support systems for their staff and provide initiatives for their teachers who are experiencing difficulties in the classroom have a higher degree of success of retaining teachers (Goodwin, 1999). Formalized support programs for new teaching staff have proven to be beneficial for all strategic players in the school environment. Research has revealed that with teacher supports in place, student academic achievement is improved, teacher effectiveness and confidence in the classroom is enhanced, there is observable growth in a teacher's classroom management skills, and teachers report an overall improvement in their sense of accomplishment and job satisfaction (Hammerness, 2000). By addressing the specific needs of new and seasoned teachers, it may be possible to improve teacher competence and satisfaction, reduce a teacher's risk to abuse, and increase the chance that teachers will intervene should they witness a colleague abuse a student. Therefore, the atmosphere developed and nurtured by a school's administrative team may not only effect job satisfaction and performance but may also minimize a teacher's stress and their potential to abuse students.

A school's culture could play a vital role in understanding teacher abuse. Those who are victimized by students, those who are bystanders to their colleague's abusive behaviours, and those who abuse students all contribute to an environment that does little to dissuade such behaviours. School administration has an integral role to play when they ensure that teachers are supported and when they ensure that a school's culture does not promote abuse.

3.10 Summary

Using the Transitional Model to address the causes of abuse provides a basis on which to understand how school-based factors may contribute to teacher stress. If teacher stress is not addressed appropriately, it may lead to abuse. There are several school-based issues that are likely to increase a teacher's stress, some of which include the needs and characteristics of students and the school environment. Regardless of the teacher's level of stress, the care-giving role expected of a teacher by society does not, and should not, allow for any form of abuse. Stress plays a role in potential causes of abuse and, as such, stress must be considered when investigating the etiology of teacher abuse.

It is apparent that there are a many potential causes of abuse by teachers. Factors such as a teacher's feelings of competence and satisfaction, as well as the school and classroom environment may singly, or in combination, contribute to feelings of stress that may lead to abuse. The following discussion brings each potential causal factor discussed above together; doing so is necessary when attempting to understand the complicated nature of abuse by teachers.

4. Multi-Factors as Causal to Child Abuse

An unhealthy classroom dynamic, students not feeling validated, having to manage students with multiple needs, colleagues' negative behaviours, and a lack of administrative support would surely contribute to teacher stress. It may be that each of these factors cause stress and impact a teacher's real or perceived competence and job satisfaction. The reasons why some teachers abuse their students seem to be related to competence and satisfaction with their job and the plethora of challenges that teachers face daily. Being able to manage a classroom filled with unique personalities and learning exceptionalities is a daunting task and is compounded when collegial and administrative issues must also be contended with. Managing children and resolving conflicts in a suitable

manner is a skill that takes years to nurture and develop and may not be taught to the extent that is necessary in Ontario's Faculties of Education. For example, there has been some question as to whether those teaching Classroom Management and Special Education classes are as well versed on the subject matter as they need to be (Burnard & Laxley, 2000). Additionally, the environmental stressors that may impact teachers are not sufficiently addressed in teacher training programs.

The relationship between abuse, incompetence, job satisfaction, stress, environment, and the needs of students may be cyclical in nature as each may affect the other. Teachers who are seen as less competent by their own students may feel less competent as teachers, which could adversely impact job satisfaction. Being less competent, and abusive, would impede the rapport building that is vital for a healthy student-teacher relationship. As relationships between teachers and students erode, a teacher may feel less satisfied with their job. The relationship between teacher abuse and its many potential causes is a complicated issue; therefore, future investigations must be conducted to determine whether each of the factors identified are indeed causal of abuse by teachers and, if so, how? Research suggests that teacher dissatisfaction has grown since the 1970's (Frase & Sorenson, 1992; Greabel & Olsen, 1986). The inclusion of new curriculum and assessment strategies, growing administrative demands, emerging, and evolving educational technologies, an increasingly diverse and challenging student population, a lack of professional prestige, additional non-teaching duties, and a perceived scarcity of teacher support may lead to increased stress for teachers. Heightened stress levels impact a teacher's ability to effectively teach and manage their classrooms, which, in turn, may lead to teacher burnout (Marlow & Hierlmeier, 1991). These conditions nurture negative feelings in a classroom and may be passed on to students (Bobbit, 1991; Boland & Selby, 1980; Chapman, 1984; Marlow & Hierlmeier, 1991).

As noted, The Transitional Model of Child Abuse (Wolfe, 1999) may be most useful when attempting to explain teacher abuse. The environment, perceived stressors, and an adult's personal characteristics all play an integral role when trying to comprehend abuse. The abuse perpetrated is dependent upon multiple environmental and/or situational factors that may lead to acts of aggression (Wolfe, 1999). Within this model, the background of the adult (parent or teacher), along with existing child rearing/classroom management practices, are factored in to how an adult caregiver responds to perceived environmental stressors. The likelihood of abuse increases with heightened levels of personal stress combined with an interaction of associated variables; for teachers, this may include the classroom environment and student needs. Each may ultimately impact the parent/teacher's behaviour. Low frustration and tolerance levels for adults, and being isolated from familial/school administrative support, compounds the problem for caregivers (Wolfe, 1999). Parents and teachers who are inconsistent, inflexible, lack creativity, and see themselves as inadequate or incompetent in their role (lesson planning/implementation for educators) are more likely to abuse the children/students under their care (Wolfe, 1999).

The Transitional Model also includes compensatory factors and, as such, this model allows for a discussion of intervention methods that could be used to alleviate abuse. According to the Model, reduced tolerance for stress and the use of aggression is caused by poor child management practices, a diminished sense of control, and stressful life events (Wolfe, 1999, p. 69). Compensatory factors such as a support network, positive colleagues, a healthy working environment, supportive administration, and knowledge of classroom management techniques may all help to alleviate stressors (or at least assist in coping with them). A brief discussion of compensatory measures is provided below.

4.1 Compensatory factors

Compensatory factors are intervention methods used to reduce the risk that stress will lead to abuse. As previously noted, the various stressors that may contribute to a teacher engaging in abuse could be compensatory if they are addressed appropriately. Feelings of competence and satisfaction may be compensatory against any stress that leads to abuse; measures to elevate teacher competence and satisfaction must be implemented to lessen the likelihood that abuse will occur. Similarly, the needs of students could elevate stress levels that precipitate abuse; however, reducing the stress attributed to planning and managing students with special requirements may help curtail abuse. Acknowledging the relationship between abuse and child behaviours, along with a better understanding of student maturation, may help address the problem of student abuse. Too often, teachers who plan curriculum related classroom work for students lack a depth of understanding and formal training to assist them in implementing age and developmentally appropriate activities. Banerjee and Horn (2009) note that a student's individual level of development and learning potential, along with student strengths, interests, and individual needs, must be carefully factored into lesson planning; not including these requirements may be factors that contribute to heightened student and teacher frustration.

It is clear that various factors contribute to a teacher's stress. These factors must be recognized if abuse is to be reduced. Unfortunately, not all stressors are easily addressed. Compensatory factors that may be difficult to implement could include those required to alter a school's culture. For example, to alleviate teacher stress, administration may be required to enforce specific school rules and to provide support for teachers when addressing the many difficult learning, emotional, and behavioural needs of students. Conversely, there are stressors that teachers could work toward reducing. Additional classroom management and child development training may help teachers apply new strategies to replace those that may have been ineffectual; increased training in new technologies may nurture feelings of job competence; and allowing students to take on a more active role in their learning may reduce students' negative behaviours. Changes in a classroom's dynamic and improved teacher-student interactions may help teachers feel more satisfied and competent. Increased support measures, and fewer stressors, may help prevent teacher abuse. The inclusion of compensatory factors may not immediately reduce all teacher stress, but the benefits of such actions will be experienced with time. With administrative, teacher, and student interventions occurring in a consistent manner, some teachers may not feel stressed to the point where they resort to abuse.

Given that students with learning, emotional, or behavioural challenges may be at risk of abuse, it is incumbent upon teachers to receive appropriate training regarding child development and learning strategies from either Faculties of Education or Additional Qualification courses available to them. If students are not meeting a teacher's work expectations or are behaving in a developmentally inappropriate manner that conflict with a teacher's expectations (i.e., questioning information, expressing curiosity) then teacher frustration may ensue. It is well known that children and students respond well to less punitive and coercive measures (Skinner, 1974; Wolfe, 1999) and alternative methods of managing classrooms must be incorporated. To assuage teacher abuse, increasing classroom management hours as well as a greater focus on child development programming in Faculties of Education may be beneficial.

4.2 Summary

As noted throughout this paper, a variety of theories of abuse are applicable to many of the factors found to be likely causal in student abuse. However, The Transitional Model incorporates many of those discussed and helps to account for the likely dynamics between stress and a teacher's abusive behaviours. In addition, The Transitional Model provides a framework for a discussion of compensatory factors that may be used to assist in reducing the risk of abuse. Although some compensatory factors, such as altering the role of school administrators, may be difficult, there are several issues that can be addressed by teachers which may help to reduce their own stress. Although more research is required to fully understand the intricacies of teacher abuse, this paper on a theoretical analysis of student abuse by educators has provided a strong basis upon which to build a better understanding of the many causal factors of student abuse.

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